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Summary

This has been a very worthwhile institute, and it is now my task to summarize what has been said here. For a number of years I was a public librarian but never a children's librarian; I am greatly interested in children's work, however, and over the years have known a number of children's librarians reasonably well. I do not claim any special knowledge or insights into this field, and if I happen to say anything which is particularly apt or strikes home, it is probably by chance and not design.

What I say here constitutes my views of what I think I heard and sometimes what I listened for and did not hear. That is to say, this is not an objective or factual summary of what each speaker said but rather my own perceptions of some of the main themes which were developed here. When I speak of books, I mean to include under that term all media.

I have organized my remarks in the form of several generalizations or guiding principles, without significance to the order of listing. First, it is clear that children's work in public libraries has had a long and distinguished history, has attracted many outstanding people, and has made many important contributions. These latter include: (1) creating the climate for school libraries; (2) always searching for new groups of patrons to serve, e.g., preschool children, the handicapped and outreach service to children of immigrant, minority and disadvantaged groups; (3) developing new services and activities, e.g., the story hour, the summer reading club, puppet shows, creative writing clubs, etc.; (4) influencing publishers to produce more and better books for children; and (5) pio-

neering in library use of nonprint, audiovisual materials. In fact, the early literature of librarianship makes mention of most activities which are conducted or being considered today; for example, the Youngstown (Ohio) Public Library had a parents' room before 1920.

Great and glorious as the past has been, children's librarians cannot expect to be allowed to rest on their laurels. Society and the world tend always to ask, "But what have you done for us lately?" To justify their work, children's librarians must continue to make contributions, to adapt to new and changing circumstances, and to find good solutions to new problems, as well as ever-better solutions to old problems.

Second, children's work in public libraries has long faced a number of major problems. School librarians are in a sense allies of the public library children's department, but in another sense they are competitors. They are much better supported than children's work has ever been, for both materials and staff, and they no longer restrict themselves to curricular materials only but seek to encompass the recreational and general reading interests of children. The great increase in children's books over the years and the rise of new media, along with an ever-wider span of children's interests, have made book selection much more difficult, not to speak of shrinking revenues and rising costs. Children's librarians generally feel that they lack the support they need from public library directors. For example, children's librarians feel that they get a small part of the library's budget in proportion to their contribution to the library's total service program; and they feel that they are generally not involved in planning even the future of children's work, let alone that of the library generally.

In 1964 the "Index of American Public Library Circulation" showed a record high (since 1939) of 52 percent juvenile circulation of total public library loans. Since then juvenile circulation has dropped steadily to 32 percent in 1976, while total public library circulation has gone up 20 percent. For better or worse, the one standard measure of use which we have is circulation, and by this measure children's work has been declining.

Third, it is necessary to state clearly what seems to have been implied by various speakers, i.e., that children's work in public libraries is important for its own sake and not simply or mainly in order to inculcate the library habit or to raise up a generation of adult library users. Children's librarians many years ago used to advance those latter arguments as justifying support for their work, but the evidence does not support that point of view. Library service to children is important and desirable in its own right, because children need, want and use books and libraries. To judge from Spodek's presentation, we don't know for sure how children

learn and mature, and thus how they can best be helped; but we librarians are convinced that books and reading are necessary elements in that process.

In fact, as we all know, children and books go together naturally, joyously and with good results. In part this may be because books serve children as a substitute for real life; the young child cannot safely experience directly many things which older children and adults can. From five to nine years of age, almost all children use books and libraries heavily, if they have the chance; from ten to fourteen years of age, somewhat fewer children are readers and public library patrons; in high school, even fewer; and in early adult life, public library users are a smaller percentage of the population than in any other age group. It would appear that children's librarians must be doing something right, and that young adult and adult librarians need to do a better job than they are now doing in serving the vital life interests of people.

Fourth, as has been stated by several speakers, children's library service today is in need of goals, objectives, planning and evaluation — in short, it is in need of a guiding theory. Goals are general ends, and by definition are never really achieved but can only be approximated. Objectives are more immediate and practical, and for best results they should: (1) be measurable, (2) relate to desired changes in the behavior of people, and (3) be realistic and practical. It is not difficult to establish measurable objectives (e.g., to serve all the children), but to phrase this objective in behavioral and measurable terms is difficult. We tend to say that the goal of children's library service is to contribute to the education of children, but we cannot specify just how this is done or with what particular behavioral changes in view. If we could identify such changes and measure them, we would then be able to ascertain (among other things) which of two or more alternate methods of accomplishing these changes is the more effective.

Practicality and realism in our objectives is necessary if we are not to be frustrated in our efforts to achieve the impossible. We need to take account of our resources in staff, money, materials, space and know-how, and to set our sights not far beyond those limits; available resources inevitably determine priorities. I doubt, for example, that we can really expect to serve all the children in our society, or to work with them on a one-to-one intensive basis. No field of public library service is much better off in this regard, in my opinion, and the general thrust of research seems to indicate that the public library is *not* a purposive educational influence.

But there are some ways open by which to grapple with this difficult and vexing problem. For example, there is the CIPP (Context, Input,

Product and Process) model, developed at Ohio State University and currently being required by the U.S. Office of Education of all state library agencies in preparing their 5-year plans under LSCA. Briefly, CIPP forces one to consider the main groups of variables which affect planning, and to spell out in detail general goals, objectives and specific activities on a year-to-year basis for achieving those objectives.

Notice that this general principle is summed up as indicating a need for theory. Theory is conspicuous by its absence in children's work (and to a large degree in all public library work). A theory is a general statement of major relationships known or thought to be true about the phenomena constituting a given field of study. As such it can be intensely practical; it is often said that we lack a philosophy of librarianship, but I think that what is really meant is that we lack a guiding theory. To evolve such a theory is difficult but not impossible, and one practical suggestion is to borrow theory from other disciplines or other areas of librarianship. Information science has a well-developed body of theory, for example, and some of the institute speakers have emphasized that public libraries should serve the information needs of children. Information science has come to recognize a hierarchy of needs, beginning with a person's real or latent need, which may not completely match the expressed need, which in turn is often modified in becoming the need as understood by the librarian, and which again is constrained by available resources in the final state of the satisfied need. Children's librarians will find many more doors opening before them when they can express a well-developed theory of what they are doing and seek to do.

Fifth, public library services to children need periodically to be examined critically, to be adapted to new and changing circumstances, and to be evaluated; and new services should be tried out regularly, in an experimental mode. Children's librarians have developed new services, of course (e.g., dial-a-story, pajamas story hours, and toy-lending service), which is commendable and indicates the vitality of the field. But more insightful services are needed, e.g., getting mothers in inner-city culturally deprived families to read books regularly to their preschool children in order to improve their reading readiness.

Activity programs for children in particular seem not to be well thought out or logically sound. As has been stated earlier, Fasick and England in their recent survey of children's work in the Regina Public Library report that 80 percent of the children use the library in order to get books, and many fewer than that to attend programs. Pauline Wilson, in her recent book *A Communications Elite and the Public Library,* presents an analysis of adult programs which may be equally valid in regard to children's work. She sees two main functions or values of programs,

viz., to stimulate use of the collection, and to serve as public relations devices. If this is so, then programs should be planned, conducted and evaluated for these ends and not for other (and usually more ambitious) ends.

Even standard or traditional services to children should not be exempt from scrutiny. I have never seen a study of reference service to children, but more than one-half dozen studies in recent years of public library adult reference service are agreed on one major point, viz., that about one-half the questions are answered incorrectly. If this is true of reference service to children, it is obviously imperative to correct the situation before the service is further publicized or expanded. We can all agree on the great need for improved measures of performance of library services, and this is particularly true of children's services.

Mention was made of the desirability of evolving (or at least testing) new services by means of experiments. Formal experiments require control groups and the comparison of data before and after the introduction of the experimental variable. Libraries are continually experimenting in an informal way, with the result that we are never quite sure how much of a change occurred or what caused it. Good experiments are not difficult to design, and we have had some good ones in librarianship already. As long ago as 1940, Lowell Martin planned a series of experiments in the South Chicago Branch Public Library. Adult fiction was to be identified by an innocuous symbol indicating each of several quality levels, and all patrons were to have identification numbers coded to indicate sex, age, education, and occupation. All books in the lowest-quality level of fiction were to be removed from the shelves, to see whether people who typically borrowed only those books would move up to the next higher level or leave the library. Unfortunately, Pearl Harbor forced cancellation of all these plans, and we still have no evidence as to whether or not providing comics or popular fiction series will lead children to anything else. It might be noted that experiments are best planned in the light of a guiding theory.

Sixth, the status and image of the children's librarian depends more on how they spend their time and what tasks they perform (and do not perform) than on any other factors. Some of the earlier papers give impressive lists of qualities desired of children's librarians, and one can hardly oppose or reject any of them. However, on one hand those attributes are desirable in all librarians and indeed in all people; on the other hand, few persons have even most of those traits. Furthermore, possession of personality traits or personal qualities is not the decisive factor separating high-status occupations from low. What counts is performance on the job.

The basic economic fact of modern life is that the American worker has increased his/her productivity at about 2 percent a year over the last fifty years, and this is what justifies increased real wages. To be sure, much of this increased productivity results from the use of more sophisticated equipment. Libraries now are beginning to use computers, for example, in cataloging and in circulation work, and already there are reports of increased productivity per hour of work. Use of complex equipment is not the only way to increase productivity; two other ways are to eliminate unnecessary work and to shift lower-level duties to less-qualified and lower-paid staff. Libraries have made great strides in simplifying borrower registration and in eliminating the slipping of books returned by patrons, but much still remains which could be questioned.

Shifting duties to lower-paid persons with less training is sometimes resisted by professional librarians. Increasingly, however, it is the hallmark of the advanced professions, with the concomitant result that the people with the more advanced training are pushing back the frontiers of their work and doing tasks which no other group could possibly handle. Nurses today are performing many duties which ten or twenty years ago were performed by doctors, and doctors are doing heart transplants and other surgery previously deemed impossible. Dentists regularly used to clean the teeth of their patients; now dental hygienists do this just about as well as dentists could, while dentists use their time more for fillings and extractions. We librarians cannot keep any level of task for ourselves alone; on the contrary, we should insist on training others to perform the lowest level of what is commonly done by librarians, so that we are able to go on to the more difficult and more important tasks.

In most research libraries today it costs more to catalog a book than to buy it. In most cases, it costs almost as much to borrow a book by interlibrary loan as to buy it. Desirable though it may be to interloan children's books, the cost to society of doing so must be reckoned with. It seems to me that over the years, children's librarians have made particularly little change in the way they do their work, or in who performs which tasks. Most of us like to work with patrons; notice that many of the tasks transferred to less-qualified personnel in other professions are those which concern and involve the people served. This is part of the price of professionalism.

My seventh point is that children's librarians have had (and should have) a major concern for the size, composition and quality of the library's collection of materials for children. It may well be that this is the major

service which librarians can perform for children: to assemble a large collection of representative materials, to organize them so that they are easy to find and to use, to provide a comfortable and attractive milieu, to inform children of their availability, and then to stay out of their way. It is symptomatic of children's work in today's world that this responsibility for materials is being steadily broadened, e.g., to secure access for children to adult books when appropriate and to juvenile materials in other libraries, and to fight for the rights of children to have intellectual freedom. The spirited discussions here this week on some of these points indicates that this responsibility is taken seriously. In general, it seems to me that children's librarians have long demonstrated great competence in this area.

Eighth, children's librarians need to acquire a lot of basic facts about their own work. By this I do not mean the sort of research about which Kingsbury writes, but rather a knowledge of many specific situations of any fairly recent date, from a good sample of public libraries across the country. Several questions were raised in this institute concerning practices in children's work, about which there is apparently no general knowledge, e.g., the number of public libraries which allow children to have access to adult books. I have been struck by the paucity of hard data in regard to children's work. People give their opinions and tell of their own experiences; these are the next best thing to evidence in the sense of verifiable observations, but not nearly as good. The 1974 U.S. Office of Education form for the national collection of public library data consisted of fifty-three questions, not one of which dealt with children's work. In a recent study of 49 state and provincial library agencies' published compilations of public library statistics, 1111 items in all were identified; of those, only 23 (2 percent) involved aspects of children's work (viz., number of children's books and number of juvenile loans).

This sort of applied or survey research can be done as well or better by individual librarians, and by library association members or committees, as by library school faculty or doctoral students. At the next higher level of complexity, children's librarians would do well to replicate all appropriate studies of adult work, e.g., the analysis of the accuracy of librarians' answers to children's reference questions. No one can do this as well or with as much insight as the people who are daily engaged in the work in question.

The ninth and final generalization is that children's librarians are first of all public librarians and are not that special or different when compared to other professional librarians in public libraries. Some children's librarians seem to think of themselves as completely different from all

other librarians, almost unique and unusual. But to judge from the remarks in these earlier papers (and from my own observations), you are concerned with service to adults as well as to children, and with adult literature as well as children's literature. Catalogers, adult reference librarians, and even public library directors all focus more on some tasks than on others, as do children's librarians, but all (including children's librarians) overlap and intersect with each other.

From a functional point of view, the problems of supervision and administration are much the same for all groups, as are those of planning and evaluation. All librarians need to be concerned with public relations, and with the political scene in the broad sense. Children's librarians are and will be necessarily involved in the general problems of public libraries (e.g., the difficulties of getting service to people in rural areas); they ought also to involve themselves in the projected solutions. Public libraries will be much the worse off for poorly developed children's departments, and children's librarians cannot expect to succeed while public libraries in general fail to prosper. With a distinguished past behind them, children's librarians can look forward to at least as great a future.